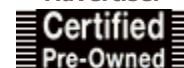


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Island tech firms push for security contracts

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Imagine a technology that would allow postal workers to immediately detect biological contaminants in the air.



Or a system that could verify within seconds if a photo identification is real or if it has been altered or tampered with.

These are not far off notions, but some of the real products on display yesterday at a technology showcase meant to tout the region's homeland defense products to government procurement officials.

The showcase organized by Rep. Steve Israel (D-Huntington) was held at Brookhaven National Laboratory in Upton and drew more than 55 exhibitors including Northrop Grumman, EDO Corp. and BAE Systems.

"The only way Long Island can compete with other regions of the country who are aggressively marketing their businesses to Washington is to make it easier for Washington to shop here on Long Island," said Israel.

Sen. Michael Balboni (R-East Williston), who was also at the showcase, says he's trying to do a similar forum like this in the spring in New York City.

Yesterday's showcase was particularly pertinent considering that for 2004, the Department of Homeland Security has allocated \$920-million for science and technology, 55 percent of which will be up for bids from the private sector, according to Marc Hollander, deputy assistant secretary for plans, programs and budgets at the department.

More than half the money will go to develop existing technologies further, a quarter toward biological counter measures, ten percent to chemical counter measures and ten percent to long-term breakthrough technologies.

Northrop Grumman thinks its technology fits. Yesterday, Ronald G. Pirich, technology manager in chemical and biological programs at Northrop Grumman in Bethpage, showcased a system that sampled air to detect biological agents.

The company got a \$250 million contract with the U.S. Postal Service to deploy the system at about 300 mail sorting facilities throughout the nation.

"The first product line is for the U.S. Postal Service, but we're looking for other applications as well," said Pirich.

Hollander says the Department of Homeland Security wants to work with companies both large and small. "Every company here has an equal shot at the money," said Hollander.

Jana Alvino, marketing manager at Intelli-Check in Woodbury, which makes an identification verification device, sure hopes so.

"If they're talking about providing funding, we're interested," said Alvino, who was at the showcase. About four years ago, the company started marketing its system to establishments that needed to use the technology for age verification like bars. The system reads bar codes and magnetic strips on drivers licenses and ID cards to see if they are authentic. Age verification is still a large part of its business, but Intelli-Check has been growing its market in security and access control, says Alvino.

For example, Alvino says the American Stock Exchange uses the technology to verify the validity of visitor ID cards.

"Since September 11, we've made a push into more of the security application of our software," she said.

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